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Engineers and the NRA

By John G. Sarber

ANOTHER "forgotten man" is coming into his own once more—namely, the engineer. The engineering profession has suffered severely during the business depression. Many trained men have been unemployed and those who were retained have been overworked in order to do the tasks of several men. Projects which should have been undertaken at reduced costs were delayed and must now be carried out with greater expenditures. But thanks to the National Industrial Recovery Act, the engineer has been given a considerable boost on the return to his rightful position.

When the average person hears N. R. A., there flashes before him the image of a blue eagle and the phrase, "We do our part." However, this is only one part of the N. I. R. A., that part under General Hugh Johnson, dealing with industrial recovery and codes of fair competition. The second part, under the supervision of Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, is the one vital to the engineering profession; it is the Public Works and Construction Program, for which the Federal Government has appropriated \$3,300,000,000. Enough money to give 825,000 students a four-year education, allowing them to spend \$1,000 apiece each year!

There are several divisions under this program. Federal projects such as battleships, highways, and postoffices are financed 100%. Three classes of organizations are eligible for loans. They are (1) political subdivisions such as states, municipalities, and counties; (2) corporations, for low-cost housing construction; and (3) private organizations, for public improvements such as hospitals. These loans are arranged by issuing bonds which the government buys. In addition to the loans, political subdivisions are eligible for outright grants of 30% of the cost of labor and materials.

Summed up, the program means just this: the National Government stands ready to help those citizens who are willing to help themselves. For example, a piece of pumpkin pie sells for ten cents. Now supposing the National Government offers to pay three cents of the purchase price on every piece that is eaten. Needless to say, the pumpkin pie consumption would increase amazingly. Perhaps this is rather a trite example, but it illustrates very well just what is being done. The administration has taken a topic which was already before the public, increased its appeal and awakened a fuller realization of it

by offering partial financial support, and has effected an amazing increase in public works and construction projects. With some "in the swim," others get the fever and follow suit, especially when they realize that they are indirectly aiding in financing such acts and may as well get their share.

Right here in Columbus are located the headquarters for the work going on in Ohio. The office is a center of activity as applications are received, checked, and forwarded to Washington for final approval. There are over 360 applications on file, representing construction amounting to approximately 83 millions of dollars. Of these, 52 millions are for loans, 19 millions for outright grants, and the rest is being furnished by the applicants. The fact that about 15% of the applicants asked for no loan indicates the money was on hand and only awaiting the initiative this act has furnished.

The personnel of the controlling staff in Ohio consists of eleven engineers. Of these, Ohio State graduates hold four positions, namely: E. B. Coady, Office Engineer; and F. E. Swineford, G. R. Leidigh, and L. G. Peterman, Engineer Examiners.

And so we see that throughout the construction program, engineers and engineering jobs predominate. It really looks as though the engineering profession has rounded the corner and is once more approaching prosperity and that position in which it may render society and civilization innumerable services.